



INAUGURAL LECTURE

**POPULATION AGEING:
TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN
THE 21ST CENTURY**

SPENCER EMPADING SANGGIN



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Spencer Empading Sanggin

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
Kota Samarahan

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PREFACE

The book basically discusses the trends in the world population growth, specifically focusing on population ageing. The global trend in the growth in the proportion of ageing population is a direct consequent of rapidly declining fertility and mortality rates. The shift from a young population to an old population goes through a transition that can be explained with two relevant theories: Demographic Transition Model and Modernization Theory. Relying specifically on the data provided by the United Nations Population Division, I tried to explore the phenomenon of population ageing in the world and use selected countries, representing the developed and developing countries as case studies.

The capacity and readiness to deal with the growing numbers of old-aged will differ between countries: Most developed countries have reached the ageing status in the past few decades, but for many less developed countries, this is totally a whole new experience. While it is argued that the growing ageing population is associated with development - economically and socially, which has enabled people in the developed world to live longer lives, at the same time it is a "cause" for concerns as old age comes with different sets of needs and challenges. Several key issues and challenges faced by

countries with population ageing are also discussed. Among the important challenges are increasing old-aged dependency burden, higher demands for old-age care services, and a strain on the economy. Last but not least, a case study of ageing in Sarawak is also presented towards the end, that provide empirical data highlighting similar trends as well as key issues faced by the old aged population in Sarawak, and such trends will certainly have serious implications and concern for the government and families as the old aged needs will increase both in numbers and intensity.

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INTRODUCTION

The global population is fast changing in size as well as structures. Such demographic dynamic is a crucial factor and contextual backdrop in the development of any country. I would also argue that economic growth, development and population change are intertwined; changes in population size and structure will impact upon development, and economic development will influence growth in population. The reduction in the rate of population growth was a direct result of declining fertility and mortality. The drop in fertility and mortality, on the other hand, was influenced by the advances in science and technology through improvement in food production, better health and an overall higher quality of life. Increasing economic productivity will create more jobs, and enhances the economy's capacity to absorb increasing number of workers into productive employment.

The aim of this paper is to look at the world population with the intention of highlighting the characteristics of population growth including the historical trend and explanations for the patterns of population change. Efforts will be made to relate the impact and challenges faced by people of different parts of the world as a consequent of changes in population structure, particularly with regards to increasing older population.

The world is rapidly ageing. The proportion of elderly population (65 and above) are on the rise mainly due to two main demographic factors: mortality and fertility. The decline in mortality and later followed by a decline in fertility have resulted in decreasing the percentage of younger population and an increase in the proportion of older population contributing to what is known as population ageing. This trend has been happening in the developed countries for over half a century ago, and is happening at a more rapid rate among the developing and less developed countries since the last few decades. Evidence have shown that the unprecedented demographic changes in the age structure has, and will have, some social and economics implications for the country and the world at large. Findings from a study on ageing in Sarawak revealed important information on the characteristics of the elderly population and the challenges they faced.



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